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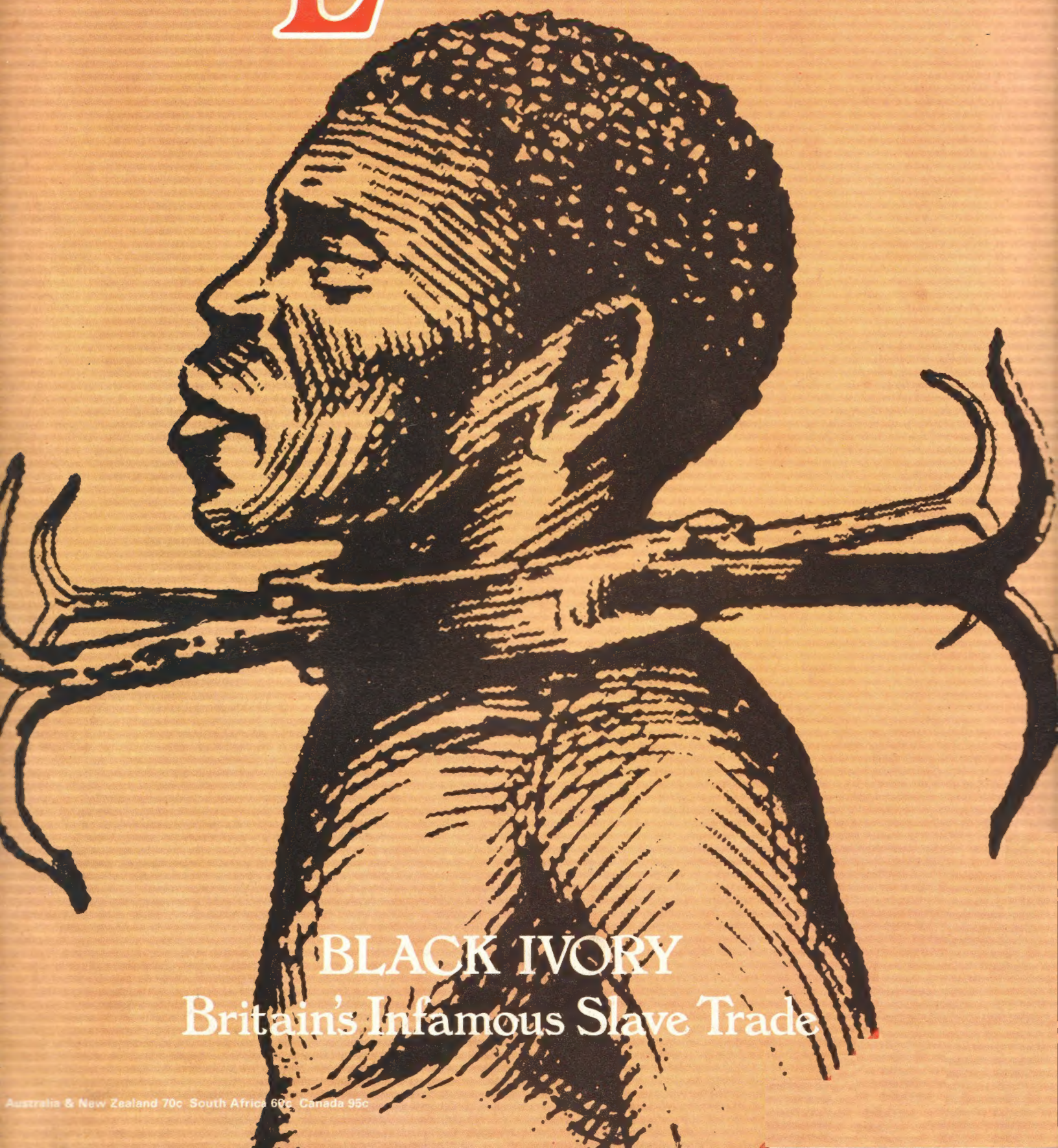

BLACK IVORY
Britain's Infamous Slave Trade

Australia & New Zealand 70c South Africa 60c Canada 95c

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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A. F. Madden, Reader in Commonwealth Government and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford

Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, the authors of the text sections of this issue, had independent careers as journalists prior to their marriage and they continue to contribute articles and interviews as a team. In addition, they have written plays for television and published *The Damn'd Master*, on the Atlantic slave trade. They have also researched the case of the *Zong*, whose captain threw slaves overboard to collect the insurance.

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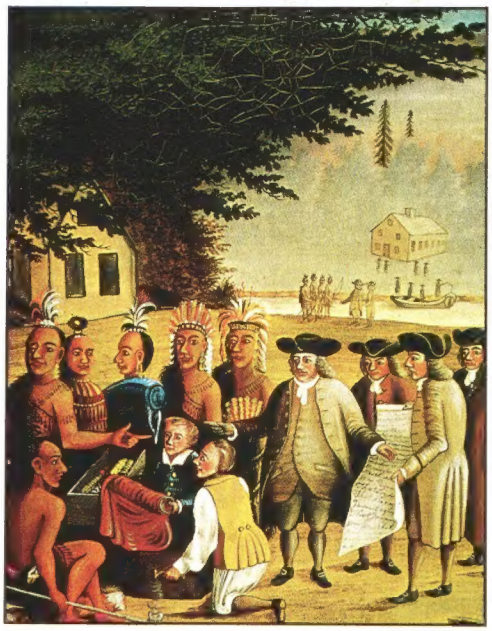

Issue No. 5: Earth's Only Paradise. English settlers in North America thought they would find gold. Wealth there was, but of the soil, and to win it took great courage and labour.

Issue No. 6: The Wealth of the Indies
A handful of traders struggled grimly throughout the 17th Century to win the riches of the East on behalf of their employer, the East India Company.

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Cover: When runaway slaves were recaptured, many owners shackled them into the pronged collar, as illustrated, to deter future escape attempts.

These tokens are valuable see inside back cover.

For 300 years, Europeans conducted a sordid trade, sending untold millions of West African negroes – "black ivory" – into slavery across the Atlantic.

By Charlotte and Denis Plimmer

The trans-Atlantic trade in African slaves began in 1517, when the first negroes were shipped to Spain's American colonies. It endured until the threshold of the 20th Century. By then, an estimated 11,000,000 negroes had been sold by their fellow Africans and transported by whites in the stinking holds of slaveships, to be marketed in scores of American and West Indian ports.

Though the Spanish and the Portuguese were the first to make slaving pay, the French, the Danes, the Swedes, the Brandenburgers and the Dutch all used and traded slaves. But it was the English who became the most daring, the most efficient and by far the most prosperous in this most lucrative trade.

England's initial ventures were tentative and brief. In 1562, the merchant captain, John Hawkins, out to test the Spanish-Portuguese monopoly in Central America, picked up a few slaves, along with ivory, spices and gold, on the West African coast. With typical Elizabethan audacity, he actually sold his blacks in the Spanish-held island of Hispaniola.

But slaving was not a matter of urgency to England, until, following in the wake of earlier European conquerors, she too began to acquire Caribbean colonies.

Then, in 1663, King Charles II chartered the Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading to Africa, and celebrated its founding with a handsome new coin, the guinea, stamped from purest African gold. The new company's very name served notice to foreign rivals that the Guinea coast, the steaming West African littoral which was supplying most of the New World's slaves, was now England's hunting-ground as well. And the creation of the company itself signalled her intention to challenge Spanish domination over the Spanish Main, for the King's seafaring Adventurers were required to deliver at least 3,000 West African slaves a year to the new sugar islands of the West Indies.

Established slaving nations had already developed the "triangular trade" which England now adopted. It was a three-legged traffic, each leg profitable: European ships brought manufactured goods to the Guinea coast, where acquisitive local monarchs accepted them in exchange for slaves; the slaves were shipped across the Atlantic and sold to Caribbean planters; the proceeds went into sugar which was carried back to Europe to buy more trade-goods.

Shipping slaves was expensive, time-consuming and dangerous, but negroes were essential in the Americas. They were hardier than local Indians, who died under forced labour. They were heathens; so enslaving them offended few Christian consciences. Since they were bought for life and not for a limited period, they were more dependable than indentured white workers.

To ensure a regular supply of slaves, the Royal Adventurers built a chain of fortified trading-posts along the Guinea coast, following the pattern set by the Portuguese and elaborated by the Dutch, then England's chief maritime rivals. The Dutch response to this British challenge was immediate. In 1667 they seized all but one of the English forts. The Royal Adventurers' company collapsed with a loss of over £120,000.

Charles II chartered a royal company with a monopoly of African trade, chiefly in slaves.

For five years English investors bided their time. Then, in 1672, a second enterprise, the Royal African Company, built new forts, and in time its 300 employees controlled the slave coast from Senegal in the north down to Portuguese Angola. By Royal Charter, none but the company's own skippers had the right to carry black cargo.

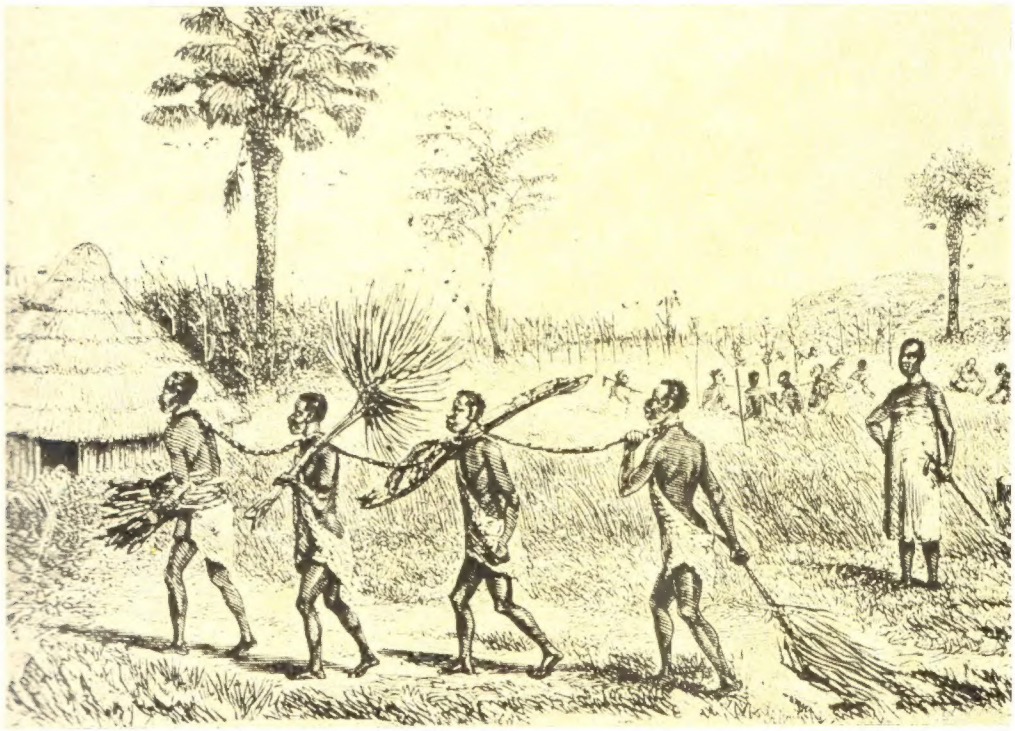
London might lay down rules, but it was the local monarchs on the Guinea coast who called the tune. To them, the sale of their brothers was neither new nor shocking. Africans had sold slaves abroad, along with ivory, ostrich-feathers and ebony, as early as 300 B.C. Their trade with the Arabs was thriving some seven centuries before the first white slavers set sail. And they themselves had always taken internal slavery for granted. Prisoners of war were almost invariably made vassals and there were slave-markets in many African towns. But ownership carried obligations to feed, clothe, shelter and protect. The loyalties of this sytem, however – comparable to serfdom in Europe – were local and immediate. There was no moral or religious impediment to slaves being sold. The Europeans took advantage of this, and taught Africans to sell other Africans.

Before the European companies could set up their stockaded trading-posts or "factories," scores of which soon dotted the coastline, they had to secure a lease from the local native ruler. This was not a difficult task, for every self-respecting ruler wanted one on his territory: the factories were important to the chiefs' prestige and, far more significantly, they were valued sources of revenue. The chiefs exacted heavy port duties and royal salutes from slaving captains, thus gaining "face" and profit. On the other hand, they supplied the caboceers, or overseers, who rounded up the cargoes. Autocratic, often irrational, local rulers set the price per slave and permitted none to be loaded aboard until the trade-goods were in their hands.

To remain on good terms, the European factors deliberately kept their presence

The "guinea," struck at the order of Charles II to publicize his new company, was named after the West African area that produced the coin's high-quality gold.

As the King of Dahomey holds court, British naval officers sit quietly by. Europeans had to observe the etiquette of local chiefs, who controlled the slave-supply.



Slaves travelled from the interior in coffles, linked together by iron collars and clinking chains. Some, like these, remained as chain-gangs at the coastal "factories."

inconspicuous, and behaved in an obsequious manner, for they lived entirely on the local rulers' sufferance. Pitiable and repugnant at the same time, the men willing to sink into these degrading jobs were the key figures in the whole grisly exchange. Cooped up in the stench of their factories, neighbour to slaves within and contemptuous black without, they seldom survived for more than two or three years.

Jean Barbot, a French factor, somehow escaped the fate of his fellows whom he described as ". . . void of foresight, careless, prodigal, addicted to strong liquors, as palm-wine, brandy and punch, . . . and perhaps no small number are over-fond of the black women whose natural hot and lewd temper soon wastes their bodies and consumes what little substance they have."

To maintain a steady supply of slaves to the factories, the African chieftains used every means possible, from all-out war on neighbouring tribes to the kidnapping of isolated individuals. Francis Moore, a factor on the Gambia River, recorded how the King of Barsally, one of the 19 chiefs with whom he dealt, would from time to time send to the English fort for brandy or rum.

To pay for it, he "attacks enemy Towns, seizing the People and selling them. . . . In case he is not at War . . . he falls on one of his own Towns. . . . He often goes out with some of his Troops by a Town . . . and sets Fire to three parts of it, placing Guards at the fourth to seize the People that run out of the Fire, and ties their arms behind them . . . and sells them."

Initially, slaves were generally prisoners of war. But since periods of peace brought scarcity, rulers began to sell their own convicted felons, too.

Not surprisingly, felonies multiplied, both in number and kind. One tribesman was sold for stealing a tobacco pipe. Another, who accidentally killed a man while shooting at a leopard, was not only himself sold, but so were his mother, three brothers and three sisters. Royal wives could be sold if caught in adultery; so it became profitable for monarchs to marry scores of girls, leave them unhusbanded and count on their natural urges to turn

them into adulteresses. Kings sometimes discovered "treasonous" plots and rounded up enormous numbers of "plotters" – invariable young, strong and, in slavers' terms, "prime meat."

Once a supply of slaves was gathered – as many as several hundred – they were linked together by chains or leather thongs into a string or coffle, from *qafilah*, the Arabic for "caravan." The coffles shuffled painfully through the jungle from as far inland as 500 or 600 miles, driven on by caboceers wielding whips of hippopotamus hide. Coffles might take months to reach the sea, all the while subject to attack by marauders, wild animals and insects. Many slaves were struck down by dysentery or fever and left to die where they fell. Others committed suicide by eating earth, rather than face the unknown terrors that awaited them.

At last the survivors were penned into the baracoon, the factory stockade, to await shipment. Men were locked to a long fixed chain; women were left unfettered to prepare the food. Armed guards watched from a tower. At sale time, the slaves, polished with palm-oil to make their skins look healthy, were paraded before the skippers and probed by the ships' surgeons.

This advertisement in a Liverpool newspaper calls for surgeons to serve on slave-ships. Their job was to keep mortality down and profits up.

Willem Bosman, a Dutch factor, wrote: "They are thoroughly examined, even to the smallest Member, and that naked too both Men and Women without the least distinction of Modesty. Those which are approved as good are set on one side; and the lame or faulty are set by. . . . In the meanwhile, a burning Iron, with the Arms or Names of the Companies, lyes in the Fire." All slaves were branded on the breast or buttock.

Sometimes there were insufficient slaves to fill a vessel, and slavers either had to lie offshore, partly loaded, waiting for additional stock, or go along the coast from factory to factory in search of more bodies. This was a perilous period. The longer a ship remained in sight of land, the greater was the chance that the slaves aboard might revolt, and the more certain it was that many sailors would die of yellow fever, dengue, malaria or black-water fever. The phrase, "the white man's grave," was coined to describe the slaving coast. "Beware and take care" went the grim old rhyme, "of the Bight of Benin. One comes out for forty go in."

Reaching agreement on price was another hazard. Skippers had to pay enough to keep the chiefs in good humour, but not so much as to endanger their owners' profits. The muskets, gunpowder, cutlasses and cannon with which the Africans subdued their enemies (and sometimes their friends) whom they later sold, were, as one factor wrote, "the chief vendible merchandise." But trade-goods varied: brass or pewter bowls; beads; linen handkerchiefs; bed-sheets; printed cottons. One ruler demanded a mirror six feet square and an armchair "for my self to sat in," among a variety of oddities including a gold-mounted cane, a red and blue coat with gold lace and a case of razors. Another was found, on his death, to have 100,000 bottles of trade-gin stored in his palace.

The slaves' last moments on African soil were horrifying. They desperately clutched the earth and fought the "captains of the sands" whose job it was to force them into the long canoes that carried them through the surf. Some threw themselves into the shark-infested seas rather than be eaten by the race of giant cannibals, called *koomi*, who, they believed, awaited them at the end of the journey across the sea.

Finally, most were thrust up over the slavers' gunwales to embark on the Middle Passage, the second leg of the triangular trade. The trans-Atlantic voyage (on an average five weeks, but sometimes up to three months) cost skippers anywhere from 12 to 16 per cent of their African cargoes. Every slave lost was a debit in the ledger, but even if only one out of three slaves survived the profit was considerable.

Ships were small, from a mere 50 tons to no more than 500. The smallest crammed a couple of hundred Africans aboard, the largest as many as 700. The science of slave-stowage was as exact and as inhuman as that of cargo-stowage. Each male was manacled hand-and-foot to a second, and sardine-packed into the main slave-deck, just over the waterline. This sea-going dungeon was rarely more than five feet high; yet round its perimeter ran a shelf which halved the headroom, but made space for a second layer of merchandise. The slaves lay athwartship, a living carpet on bare boards. Each was allowed some 16 or 18 inches' width, about the width of a coffin.

Women and children were segregated from the men and permitted proportionately less space; but at least they were not hobbled by manacles.

Some skippers believed that more elbow-room saved lives and, therefore, money. Others argued that the more you packed in at the start, the more you'd have left at the finish. The latter view tended to prevail until 1788, when Parliament specified a more merciful ratio – five slaves for every three tons of carrying capacity.

At sea, slaves were taken up on deck twice a day for meals. "For the preservation of their health," they were exercised or "danced" by sailors swinging cat-o'-nine-tails. The manacled men, their ankles and wrists raw from the irons, were forced to jump up and down. The women and children cavorted about them joylessly, a *danse macabre* to the mournful wheezing of a sailor's bagpipe or to the plangencies of the slaves' own primitive banjoes.

Meanwhile, the crew swabbed out the slave-deck, thick with excrement and vomit. According to Alexander Falconbridge, a ship's surgeon, it was "so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux [dysentery] that it resembled a slaughter house." It was said that "you could smell a slaver five miles downwind."

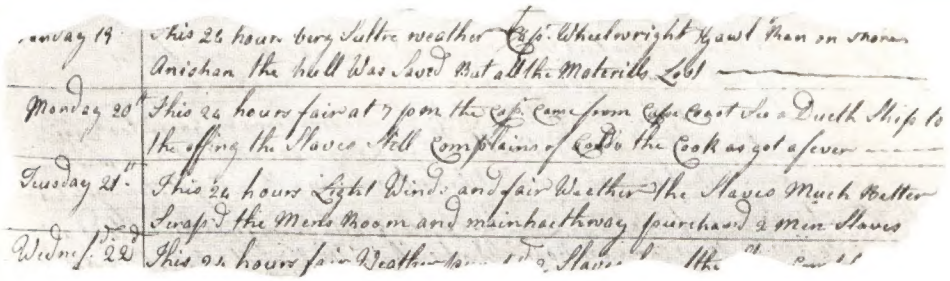
Certain tribes, particularly the Ibo, were subject to a mortal melancholia. They squatted, their heads hanging between their knees, resisted all attempts at forced feeding and quietly ceased to breathe. Skippers could lose as many as two or three slaves a day from this mysterious trauma. Others went mad and were clubbed to death. The rebellious fell under the lash. Some committed suicide. A few were slain during running sea-fights between slavers and privateers intent on seizing the black cargo.

Contagious disease, however, was the most devastating killer of all. It was common practice to throw an infected slave overboard in order to save the rest. On one voyage, the slaver *Hero* lost 360 slaves to smallpox, roughly half her load. In a famous case, Captain Luke Collingwood of *Zong* jettisoned 132 sick slaves and later claimed their value from the vessels' insurers. For every slave landed, it has been estimated, another died in the coffles, in the baracoons, on the sands or in the Middle Passage.

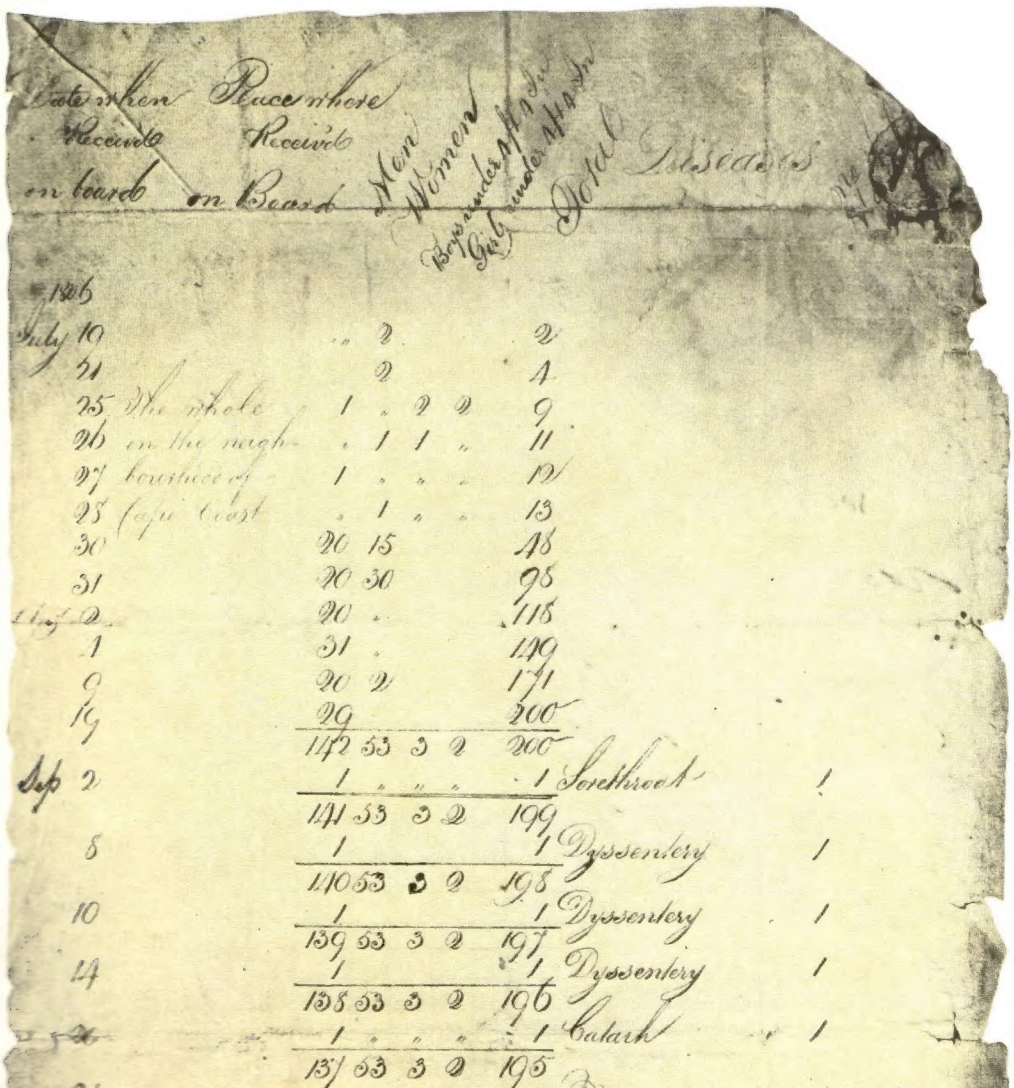
But crews were often treated even worse than the Africans, for sailors were far less valuable than slaves. Ships' surgeons took the line that they were paid to attend slaves, not seamen. If rations were short, the rule was slaves before sailors. Flogging was normal. In a single crossing aboard *Alexander*, all but three of the 50-man crew were flogged, one so frequently and so brutally that he threw himself overboard.

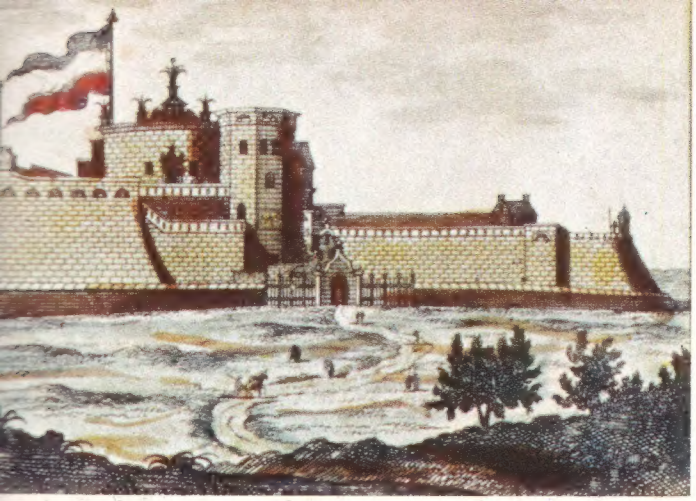
Towards the end of the Middle Passage captains deliberately made sailors' lives so unbearable that, on arrival, they jumped ship. This not only saved the masters their pay, but freed them from the expense of carrying sick or disabled seamen back to England.

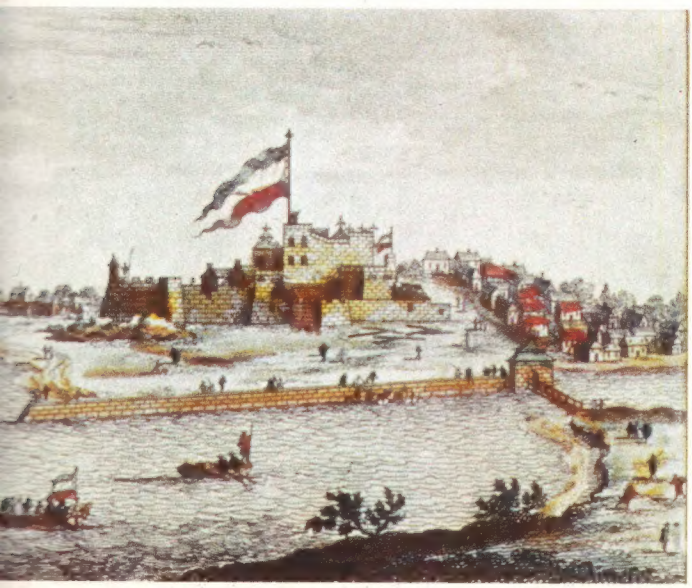
Ashore, as these derelicts shuffled off into the slums and alleys of the island ports, the slaves assembled on the quayside drew the eyes of the connoisseurs. Sometimes entire shipments were consigned to a single planter in advance, but more often the blacks were marketed on the spot. Buying was no job for an amateur for the Africans, fattened up during their last days at sea, their sores and abscesses disguised with rust and gunpowder, their anuses stuffed with oakum to hide evidence of the flux, paraded like prize bloodstock, had to be inspected to guard against deception ❧



Log entries from two British slavers reveal constant worries about disease on board. A major killer was dysentery, "the bloody flux."



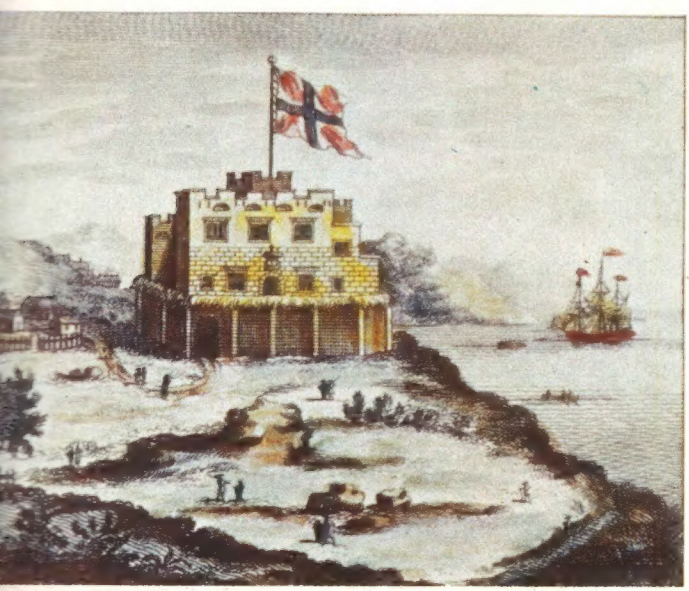


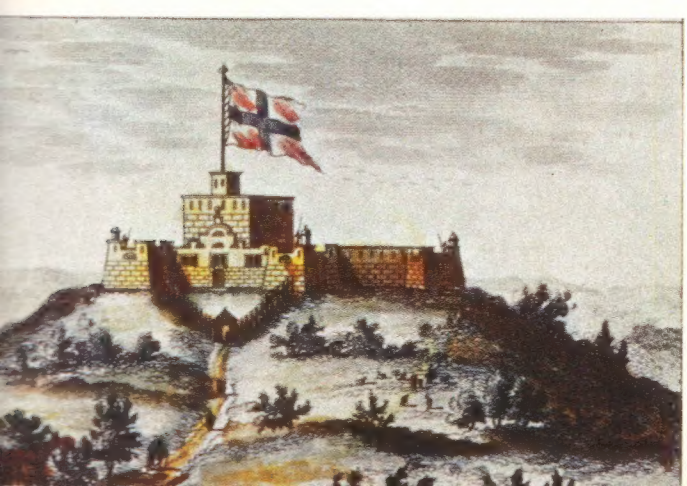


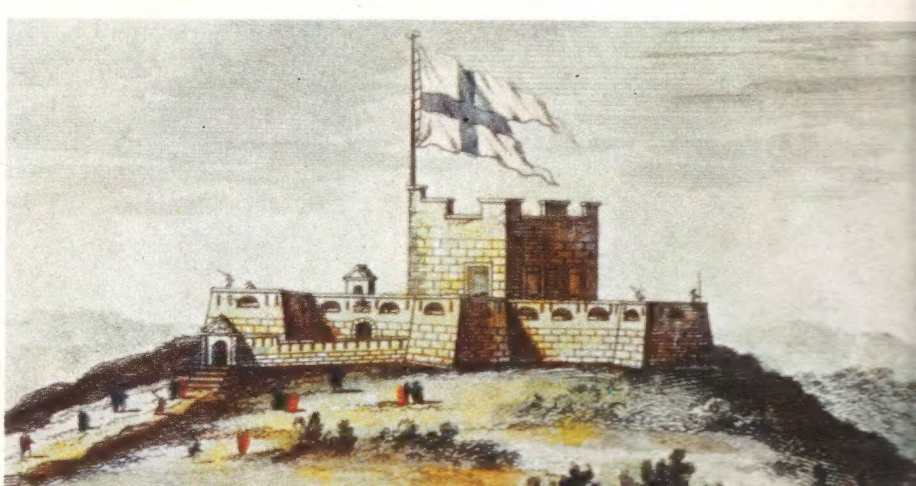
A CORRUPTING COMMERCE

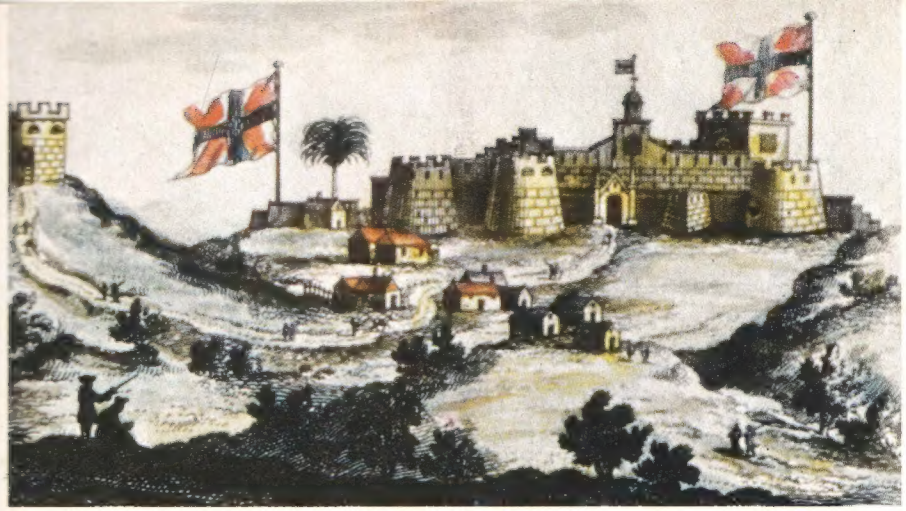
Perched on the edge of the vast unknown, the trading-forts of West Africa – the warehouses of the slave-industry – were for three centuries the only outposts of European power. By the end of the 17th Century, when the map on the right was drawn, the coast was fast becoming one long wharf. Once, Portugal had been the dominant power here, but now the flags fluttering over the castles, some of them illustrated in these 18th-Century French engravings, were chiefly British, Dutch and Danish.

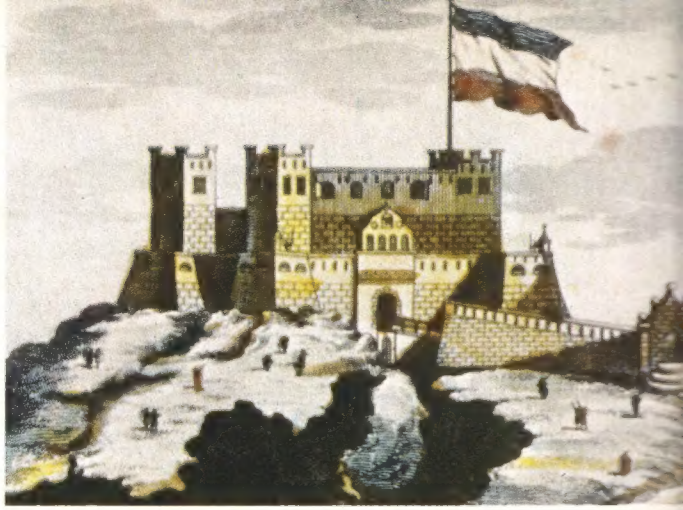
Life in the forts was foul and boring. The ordinary soldiers and clerks – "white negroes" a visitor called them in 1737 – were underfed, overworked, feverish and short-lived. Although their lives were incomparably better than those of the miserable slaves who languished in the fetid dungeons beneath their feet, the white men were scarcely happier. Life-expectancy was seldom more than two or three years. With their African mistresses, they passed the lingering hours with long meals and heavy drinking, listlessly waiting in the tropical heat for a new consignment of "black ivory," brought by African suppliers in the hinterland for despatch across the Atlantic.











A Draught of the Coast of
AFRICA
from the Streights
Mouth to Cape Bona
Esprance
Note
The Flaggs denote the Factory
and the Place on the Coast where the
Flaggs are Raised from, shews where
such Factory stands, and the Name
writt against the Flaggs is the Name
of those Factorys
AFRI=
BAR=
BA=
RIA
CA
GUINEA
The Tropick of Cancer
The Æquinoctiall
NARY
Brandenburgh
R. Senegal
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BENNIN
GABON
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ANGOLA
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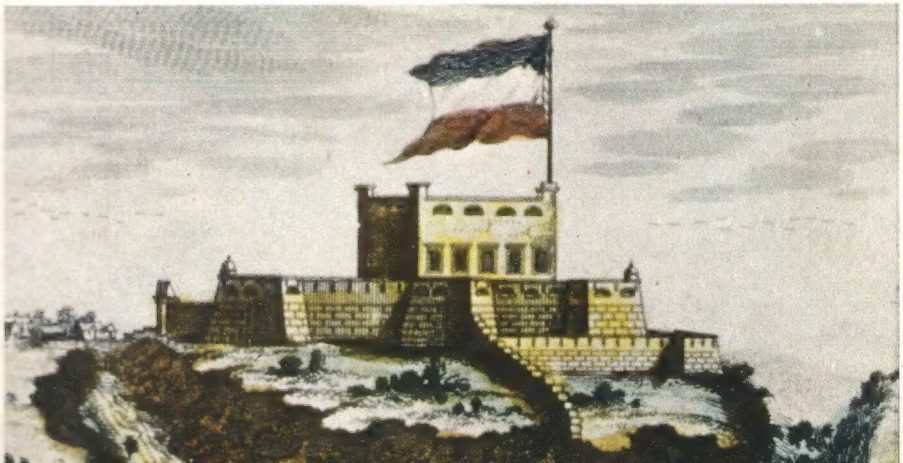
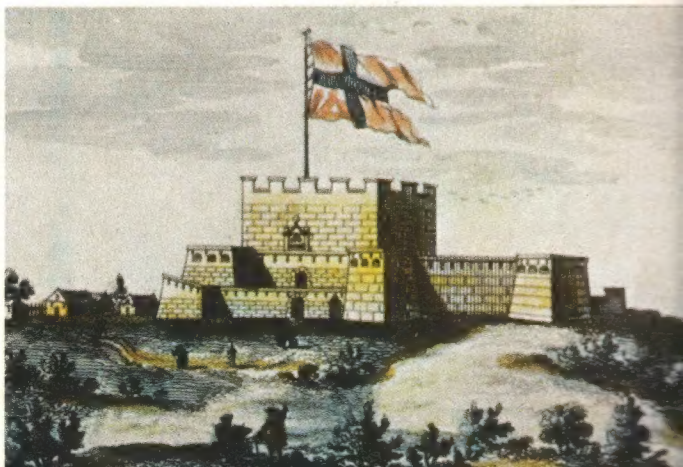




Monstrous Pillage, Vast Profit, Social Chaos

Though the engraver of these 18th-Century illustrations portrayed the noble savage as a victim of white treachery, few white men ever penetrated the jungle to observe Africans in their natural state; instead they relied on the coastal tribes to supply the almost constant flow of black ivory that made slavery so profitable a business for native rulers.

Slavery was also a destructive business. Pillaged villages were left smoking at dawn after nights of slave-raiding by rival tribes. The King of Barbessin was even persuaded by the French to ransack his own kingdom for living merchandise. As the market for slaves grew, and with it the supply of European firearms, the struggle to control supplies brought constant warfare; social chaos attacked the fabric of West African life and eventually struck deep into the heart of the continent.

In this fanciful French engraving, trusting Africans welcome a party of European sailors. In fact they would probably have fled, for white men were at first thought to be sea-monsters.

The white men betray their monstrous nature by carrying their hosts into slavery. Fear of kidnapping made even the black overseers wary of approaching the ships.

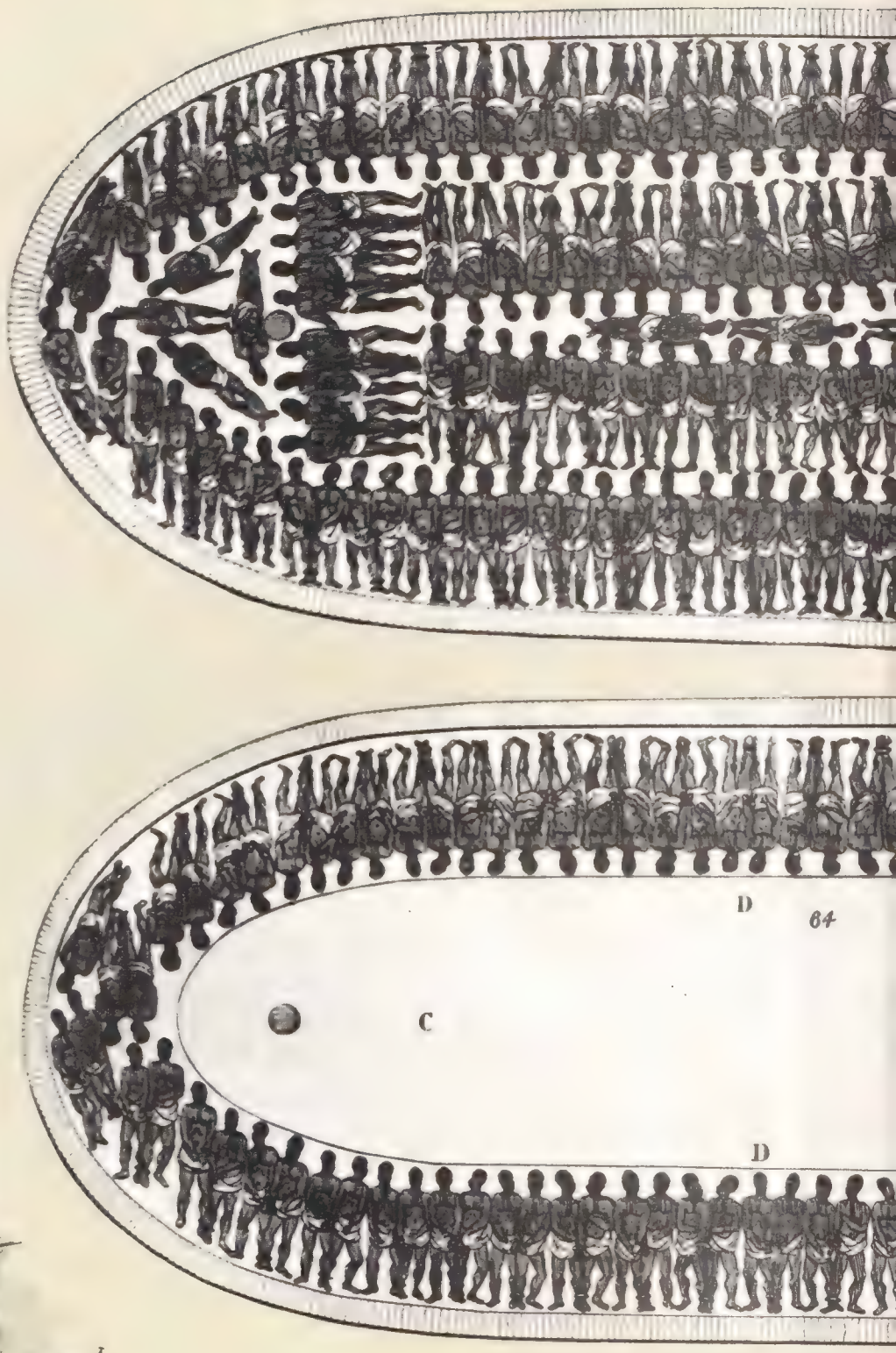
A romantic vision of Africans at worship extols the simple perfection of natural religion before it was destroyed by the demands of rapacious slavers. The fruits of the earth are blessed at the shrine (centre) and shared out among the community.

Hell in a Floating Dungeon

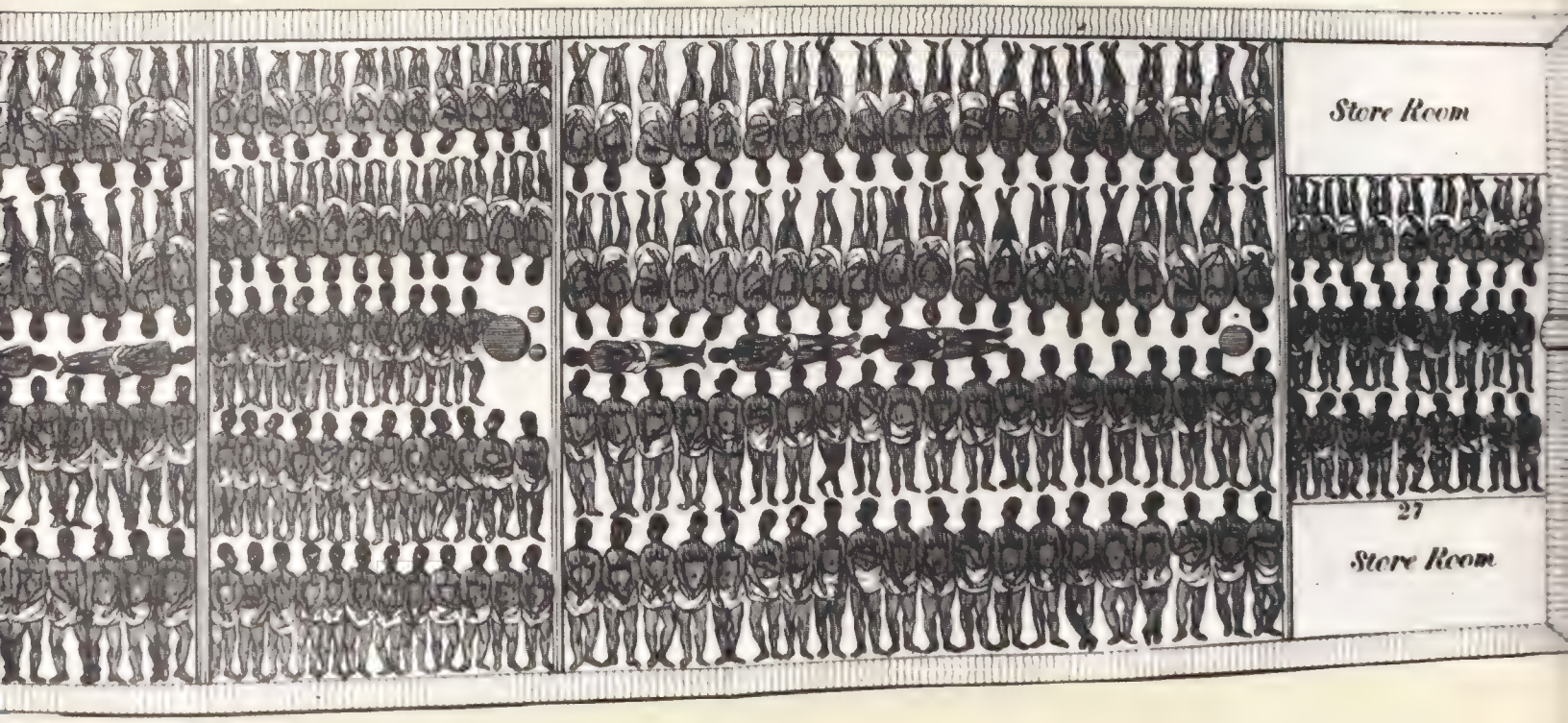
The long journey from Africa to America – the Middle Passage – was a horrible experience, both for slaves and crews. To describe over-crowding on slave ships, reformers in the late 18th Century used charts like those on the right which show how over 400 slaves could be packed into a Liverpool ship of 320 tons. On one voyage the same vessel had carried 609 slaves. By then such excessive overloading was becoming rare and captains were more careful in preserving their valuable human cargoes. This was reflected in the mortality rates which, interestingly, were lower than on ships taking British emigrants – who offered no opportunity for profit-making – to America in the mid-19th Century.

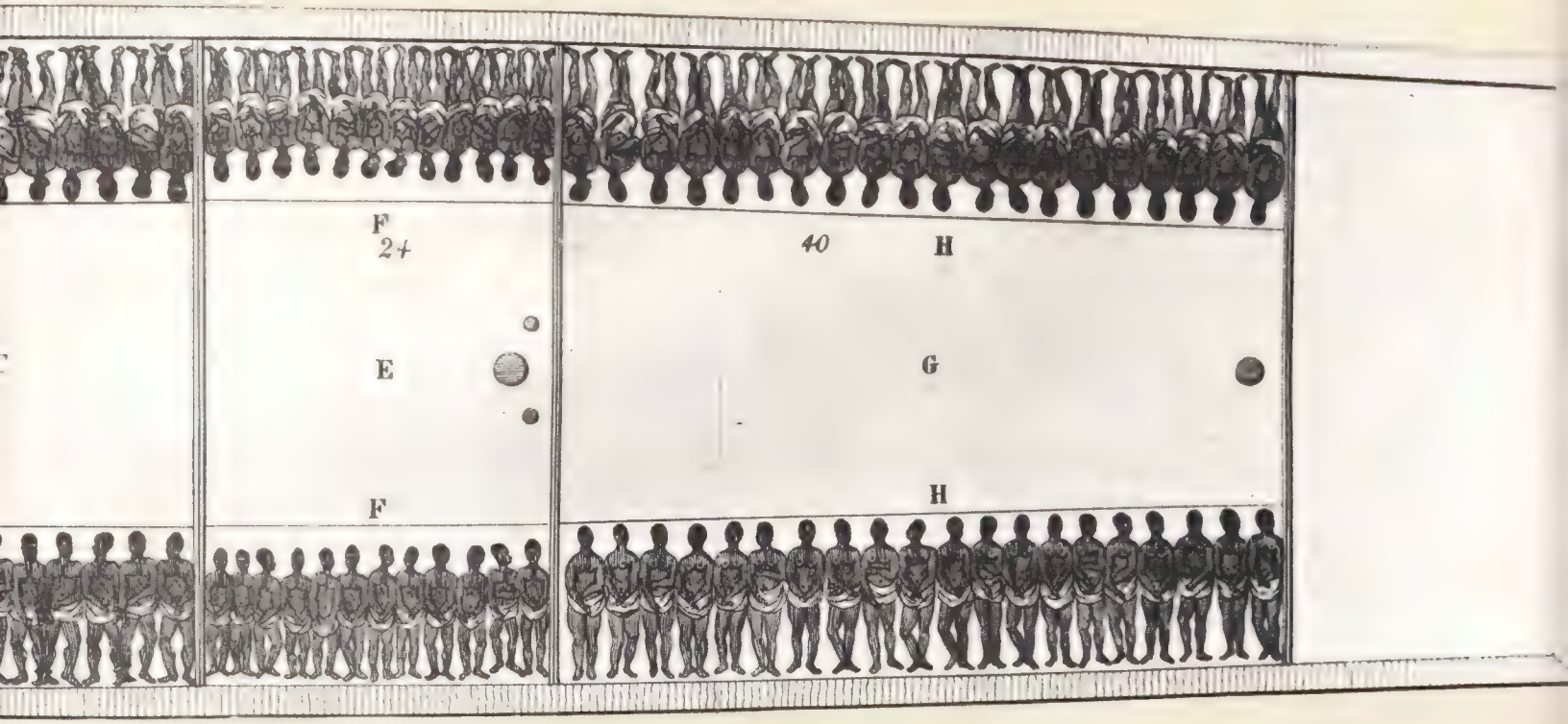
But even after improvements, the stench of slave ships could be smelled miles down-wind and their sailors yarned about the "howling, melancholy noise" coming from the holds at night and about slaves who went mad or attempted suicide. Because of the risk of mutiny, lighted matches were held at the ships' cannons when the slaves came on deck to be fed. It was rule by firepower, often by louts and always by sheer force.

Slave mutinies, such as the one pictured here, were suicidal in the face of well-armed, frightened crewmen. But despairing negroes felt they had nothing to lose.

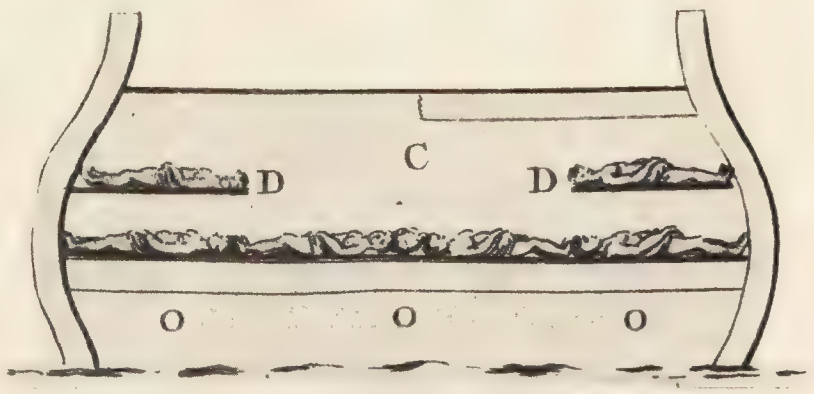


These plans were drawn in the late 18th Century to expose British slaving practices. On the main deck, 5 ft. 8 in. high (top), the centre and aft section were saved for smaller slaves and children. The tween-deck space was further sub-divided by a six foot wide shelf (above) that ran round the hull.





This 3 ft. 3 in. high shelf on another vessel allows the slaves to sit, but prevents most of them getting up to reach the latrine buckets.



A cross-section of the plans above reveals headroom so low that the slaves underneath the shelf had to lie flat.

II. Hard Labour for Life

The best specimens were usually sold by "scramble" on the ship. A flat price was first fixed for men, women and children; then the buyers rushed aboard and scrambled to grab the choicest. Prime slaves went for about £60 at the end of the 18th Century, when a man could live comfortably on £30 a year.

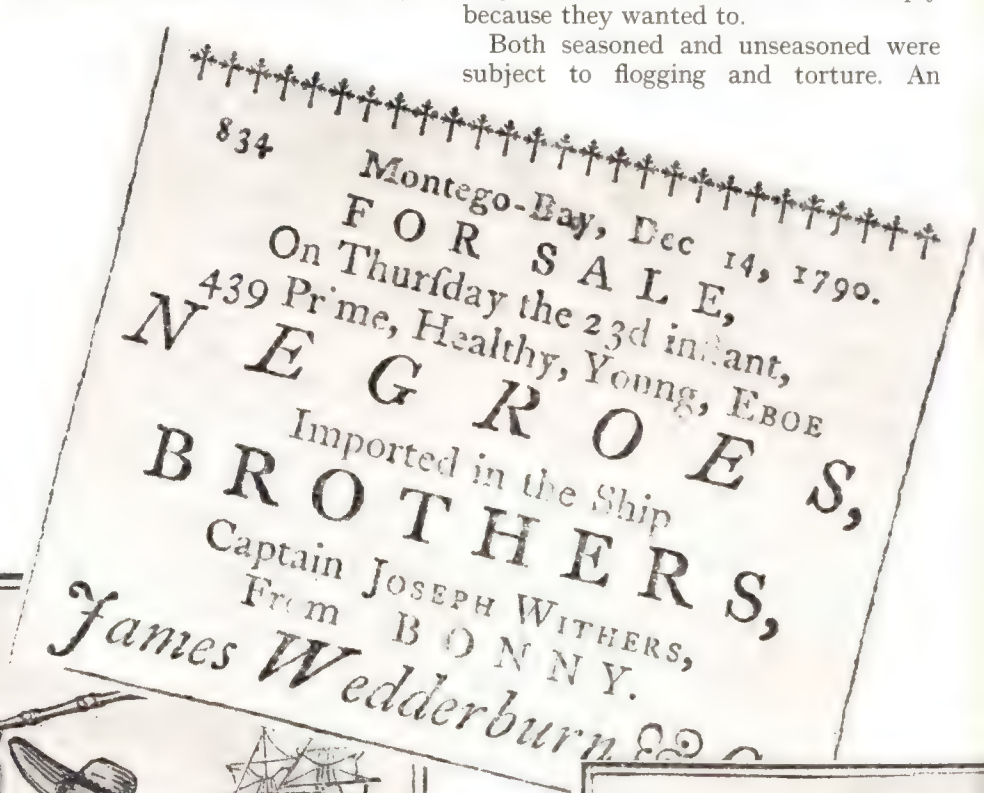
The "refuse" – those whose weaknesses could not be concealed – were auctioned by candle. Bidding lasted as long as it took a candle to burn an inch and seldom went above a pound or two a head. Doctors sometimes bought the feeblest, cured them and resold them at a profit. There were always a few left over – too wasted to fetch even a few shillings – who were abandoned on the waterfront to die.

The price of a slave was also governed by the characteristics that the slavers had assigned to his tribe. The Felup, a Senegambian people, were considered charming but lazy – worthless in the fields, though useful as domestics. The Mandingo, from a bit further south, made good metal-workers and coopers. The Chamba, of Sierra Leone, were excellent all-round workers. The Krumen, from the Grain Coast (now Liberia) were splendid sailors; they were often used in Africa to ferry new slaves out to the ships. The Awikam, from the Ivory Coast, were vicious and mutinous, but hard workers if kept under control.

The Fanti and the Ashanti (from what is now Ghana) were strong and lean and brought top prices as magnificent field-hands; but being bred to war, they often became leaders of insurrections. Their neighbours to the east, the Ewe and the Yoruba (Nigerians today) were healthy and industrious, excellent agriculturists and almost as expensive as the Ashanti. The Ibo (in recent times leaders of the Biafran Revolt) were intelligent, practical and gentle, but given to suicide and over-sensitive to pain.

The new or "bozal" slave had to be seasoned during a brutal period of teaching, taming and assessing natural talents that might take up to several years. Some were trained in novice groups, others scattered among seasoned slaves. In either case, as many as a third died of diseases brought from Africa; because they couldn't acclimatize, or simply because they wanted to.

Both seasoned and unseasoned were subject to flogging and torture. An


834

Montego-Bay, Dec 14, 1790.

FOR SALE,

On Thurſday the 23d inſtant,

439 Prime, Healthy, Young, EBOE

NEGROES,

Imported in the Ship

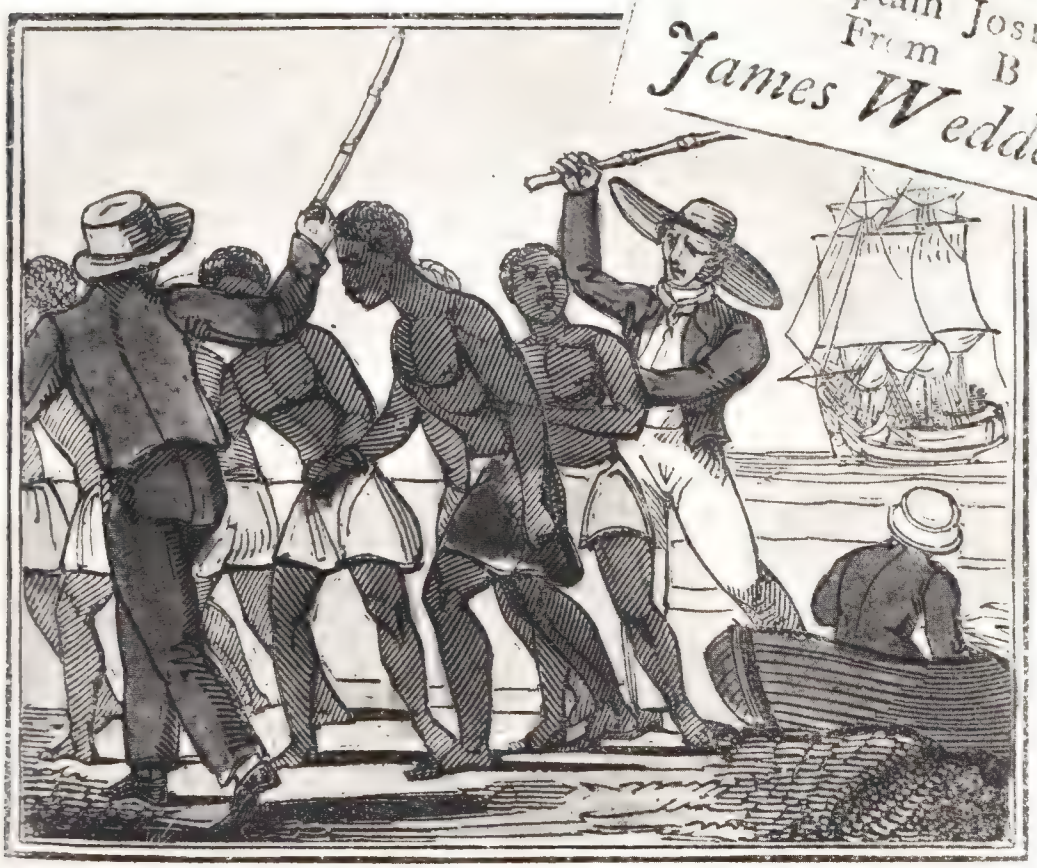
BROTHERS,

Captain JOSEPH WITHERS,

From BONNY.

James Wedderburn & C

On his arrival in the sunny Caribbean, still dazed from the darkness of the Middle Passage, the new slave was (below, left to right) swiftly unloaded, sold and set to work by the overseer's cart-whip in a system from which escape was the sole relief.



Antigua resident recorded: "The punishments . . . [include] the thumbscrew. . . . The iron necklace is a ring locked or rivetted about the neck. . . . The 'boots' are strong iron rings . . . closed just above the ankle; to these some owners prefix a chain. . . . The 'spurs' are rings of iron . . . to which are added spikes from three to four inches long. . . . A boy who has not yet seen his fourteenth year [regularly] passes by my house . . . with no . . . clothing." If women offended, they, like the men, were stripped naked, hung by their thumbs and mercilessly flogged with lashes of plaited cowhide that gouged deep wounds in their skin.

Slaves planted and cut the sugar-cane, milled, boiled and distilled it, and tended the planters' homes. They worked from sunrise to sunset, with a half-hour or so off for lunch, often a mess of half-rotten salt fish imported in Yankee vessels.

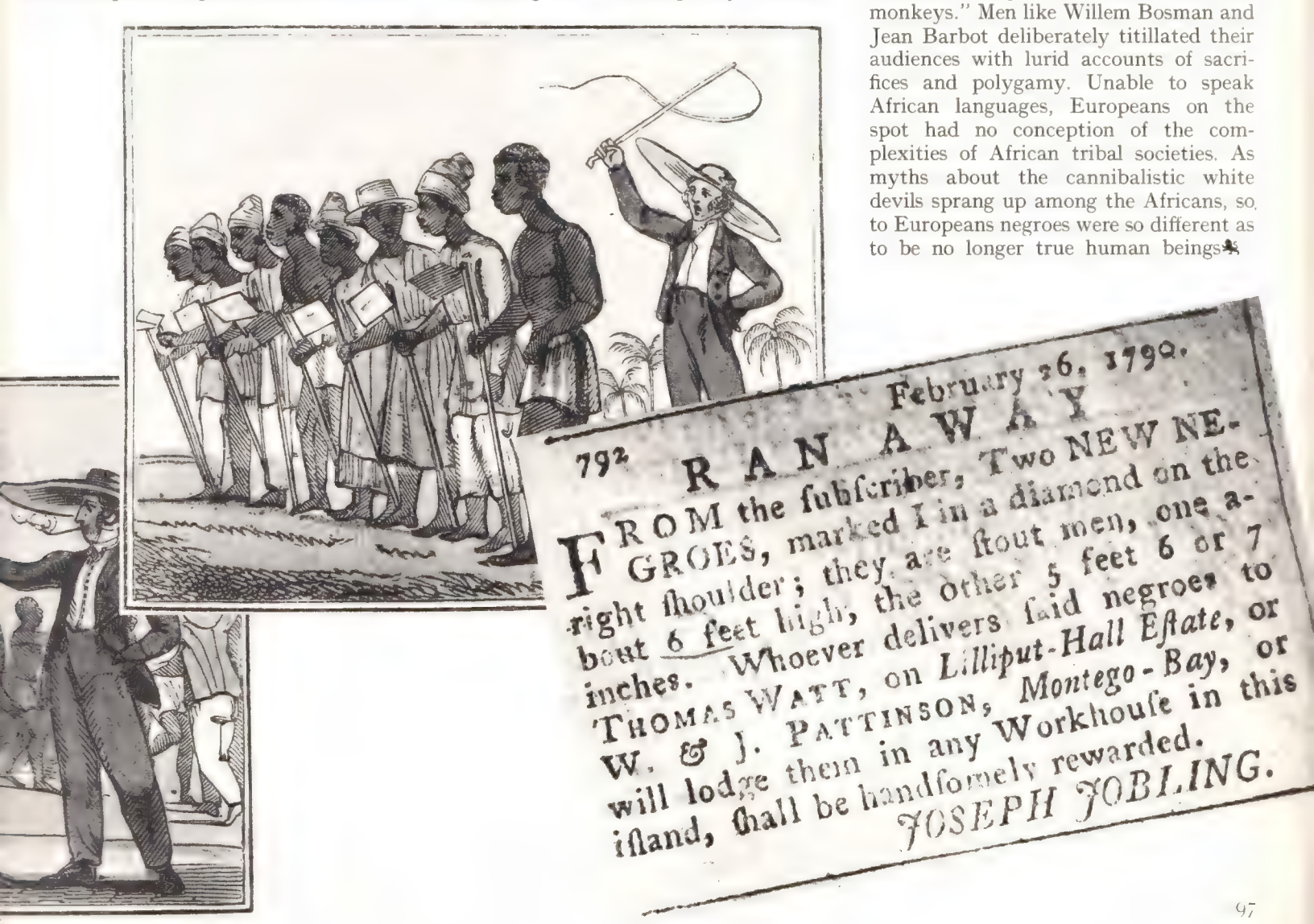
Slave-marriages, when not expressly forbidden, were discouraged. Men were herded together in gang-huts, and women housed some distance away. If a negro couple did marry, their status had no legality; their owner could and would sell them separately. There was anyway little chance to marry: men far outnumbered women and the whites took the best-looking girls as mistresses.

Most planters saw no point in breeding slaves. Rearing babies cost time and money which they considered better spent in buying new stock mature enough to put to work at once. It was a general rule that an entire new generation had to be imported every 20 years to replace those who had died. The expanding economy demanded constant additions to the slave population as well. Negroes in the islands topped whites in a matter of decades. Barbados had only a few hundred Africans in 1640; 6,000 in 1645; 20,000 in 1650; 80,000 in 1700.

The whites lived in constant fear of insurrections, which erupted frequently and violently. Punishments were savage. According to a contemporary account, the "arms, thighs, legs and backbones" of several black insurgents "were broken with clubs on a scaffold. They were fastened round a wheel [with] their faces . . . turned upward to receive the full glare of the sun." The judge pronounced: "Here they are to remain for so long as it shall please God to preserve them alive." Afterwards, their heads were exhibited on poles.

Were the trade's practitioners, and all those who benefited directly or indirectly, simply a lunatic band of racialists and sadists? Plainly, they could not have been. The merchants of London, Bristol and Liverpool did not hate black men; few had any contact with Africans at all. To them, they were little more than articles of a rather specialized trade.

Attitudes were formed early. In the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries, characters with black skins were already either villains or clowns. In a lawsuit of 1693, slaves were classified with merchandise along with "musk cats and monkeys." Men like Willem Bosman and Jean Barbot deliberately titillated their audiences with lurid accounts of sacrifices and polygamy. Unable to speak African languages, Europeans on the spot had no conception of the complexities of African tribal societies. As myths about the cannibalistic white devils sprang up among the Africans, so to Europeans negroes were so different as to be no longer true human beings.



A Slave Remembers

Of those who wrote first-hand accounts of the slave-trade merchants in the slaving-ports – hard-drinking factors on the Guinea coast, sea-captains and tough slave-owners – few said anything about the slaves themselves. There were, however, a few slaves who knew, or learned how to write and who could fill this gap. The most famous of these was Olaudah Equiano, renamed Gustavus Vassa by his master, who became active in the British anti-slavery campaign. Born in the ancient kingdom of Benin, son of the headman of a village, Vassa was kidnapped as a child, transported to Barbados, and later bought by an Englishman from whom he regained his freedom. In 1789 his memoirs, written with the help of his abolitionist friends, were published in London. In these excerpts (reprinted with modernized punctuation), he describes his arrival on the West African coast – like most slaves, he imagined the white men were cannibals – the horrors of the Middle Passage and his sale in the New World.

"The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound, by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions, too, differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief.

Indeed such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship, too, and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted.

When I recovered a little I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair. They told me I was not.

I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to hear, nor had I the least desire to taste any thing. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across, I think the windlass and tied my feet, while the other

flogged me severely.

I had never experienced any thing of this kind before; and although not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and, besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water: and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself.

I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shewn towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast, that he died in consequence of it, and they tossed him over side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner.

I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen; and I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place [the ship]? They told me they did not, but came from a distant one. . . . I asked how the vessel could go? They told me they could not tell; but that there were cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits.

The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers.

This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps for myself I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters.

One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempts procured them some very severe floggings.

One day when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately another quite dejected fellow, who on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade.

At last we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes, at which the whites on board gave a great shout.

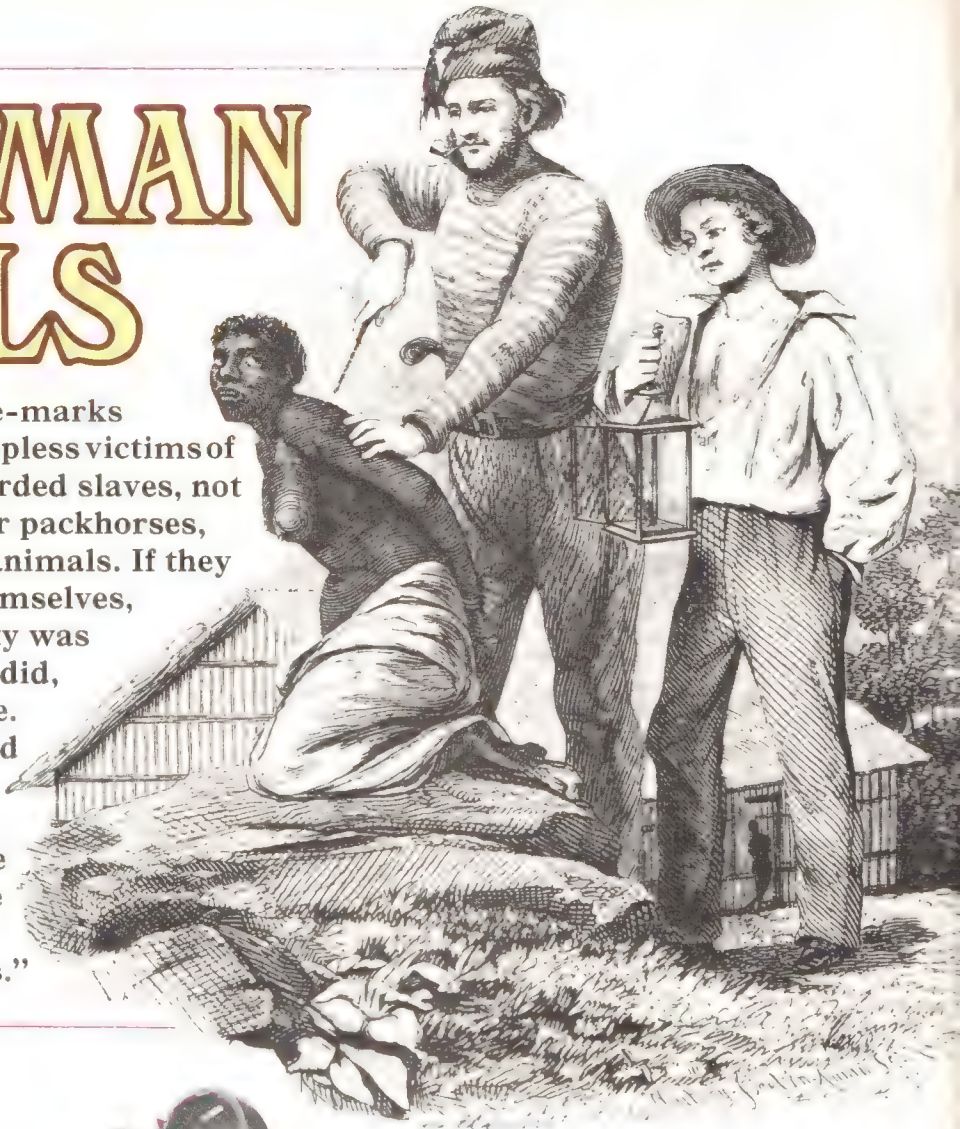
Many merchants and planters now came on board. They examined us attentively, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this we should be eaten by these ugly men, and there was nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions. . . . [In the morning] we were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent up together like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. We were not many days in the merchant's custody before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamour with which this is attached, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehension of the terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted.

In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. I remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion to see and hear their cries at parting.

O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends, to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? ❞

THE HUMAN ANIMALS

From the moment the red-hot trade-marks seared their skin, slaves were the helpless victims of their masters' whims. Owners regarded slaves, not as men, but as chattels like mules or packhorses, and often treated them worse than animals. If they had regarded slaves as men like themselves, they could only have felt their cruelty was wrong. But regarding them as they did, they suffered no pricks of conscience. It was an attitude incisively parodied by Montesquieu, the 18th-Century philosopher, who said, "it is impossible to allow that negroes are men; because if we allow them to be men, it will begin to be believed that we ourselves are not Christians."



A slave is branded with a trader's initials. Most brands, like that at left, were of silver because its weals healed faster than those made with iron.

Shackles and chains, which tightly linked slaves together, were in constant use.

A dealer checks a potential purchase for bad teeth or grey hair. On the right a colleague bargains with the caboceers.

A dry-as-dust list of 1787 from Antigua reveals that slaves could be valued as low as sixpence. Few slaves are listed as "old," for their life expectancy was mostly very short.

Inventor &c Continued

Negroes

Names	Employment and Discription	Price	
Jimmy	A compt mill Carpenter &c in his prime	£ 330	
Yankey	Mill boatswain & half bred Carpenter old	50	
Cubbina	A Good mason workman healthy and Young	150	
Guy	A well disposed promising Lad A mason	100	
Billy	A Good workman A mason	115	
Butler	Very Indifferent fellow with bad legs		6
Ceasar	A Good and Intelligent Driver Carter &c	150	
Arajuna	A Good driver Mill feeder &c	155	
Rickard	Mill feeder and Carter Sensible knowing	100	
Primas	An Excellent Teach boiler Ruptured (old)	25	
Broomer	Ditto and Liner in prime of Life	165	
James	Ditto an Intelligent Good fellow	165	
Quacoe	An Excellent Carter and Knowing About Cattle	125	
Tom	Ditto young Active & well Inclined	125	
George	Ditto A Good field Negroe	60	
Francois	Ditto Ditto	130	
Buff	Mill feeder & Carter Ditto	90	
Luis	A Good Carter Ditto	125	
Scipioe	A Good field Negroe and fier man	55	
Monday Boy	A Carter & Ditto Intelligent and well disposed	110	
Jacob	Ditto and Ditto	100	
Oistin	A well disposed field Negroe	70	
King	A Carter and Ditto	75	
Castillo	A Boiler and Able field Negroe	75	
Polledore	An Able field Negroe	110	
Grandison	A Boiler and Ditto	85	
Will	A Good teach Boiler and Valuable boiler	140	
Wmill	A fireman and Good field Negroe	90	
Peter	An Excellent Mill man and Valuable Negroe	100	
John	Afflicted with a Pothysical Complaint	10	
Frank	A fireman and field Negroe Sore feet	20	
Harry	A Good fierman old		6
Solomon	A Ditto &c	40	
Quashey	now A house Boy when in the field Nash	90	

Confinement to bed-stocks, a customary punishment for drunkenness, was a sharp reminder of reality after brief escape into revelry.

The muzzle and the iron necklace, brutish devices that aptly expressed the white man's contempt for negroes, were but two products of the massive industry that produced shackles, thumbscrews, collars and chains by the ton.

Crime and Punishment, West Indian Style

Unlike animal chattels, slaves could understand the meaning of crime and their behaviour could be corrected – a distinct advantage to the planters. But in the West Indies the principle of justice, that the punishment should fit the crime, often did not apply since the only court of appeal was the slave-owner who had devised the punishment in the first place.

For minor offences, owners sometimes castrated their slaves, or chopped off an ear or half a foot. Runaways had heavy iron rings placed round their ankles or necks when recaptured.

For serious offences, planters devised "several very exquisite torments," reported a visiting British physician in 1688. One of the most barbaric was the practice of nailing slaves to the ground and then "applying the fire by degrees from the feet and hands, burning them gradually up to the head, whereby their pains are extravagant."

Some slave-owners fiercely defended such behaviour as essential for law and order. There was a certain truth in this, since by the end of the 17th Century the planters' demand for labour had increased slave populations to a dangerous size. Therefore, they had to be kept in a constant state of mortal terror.

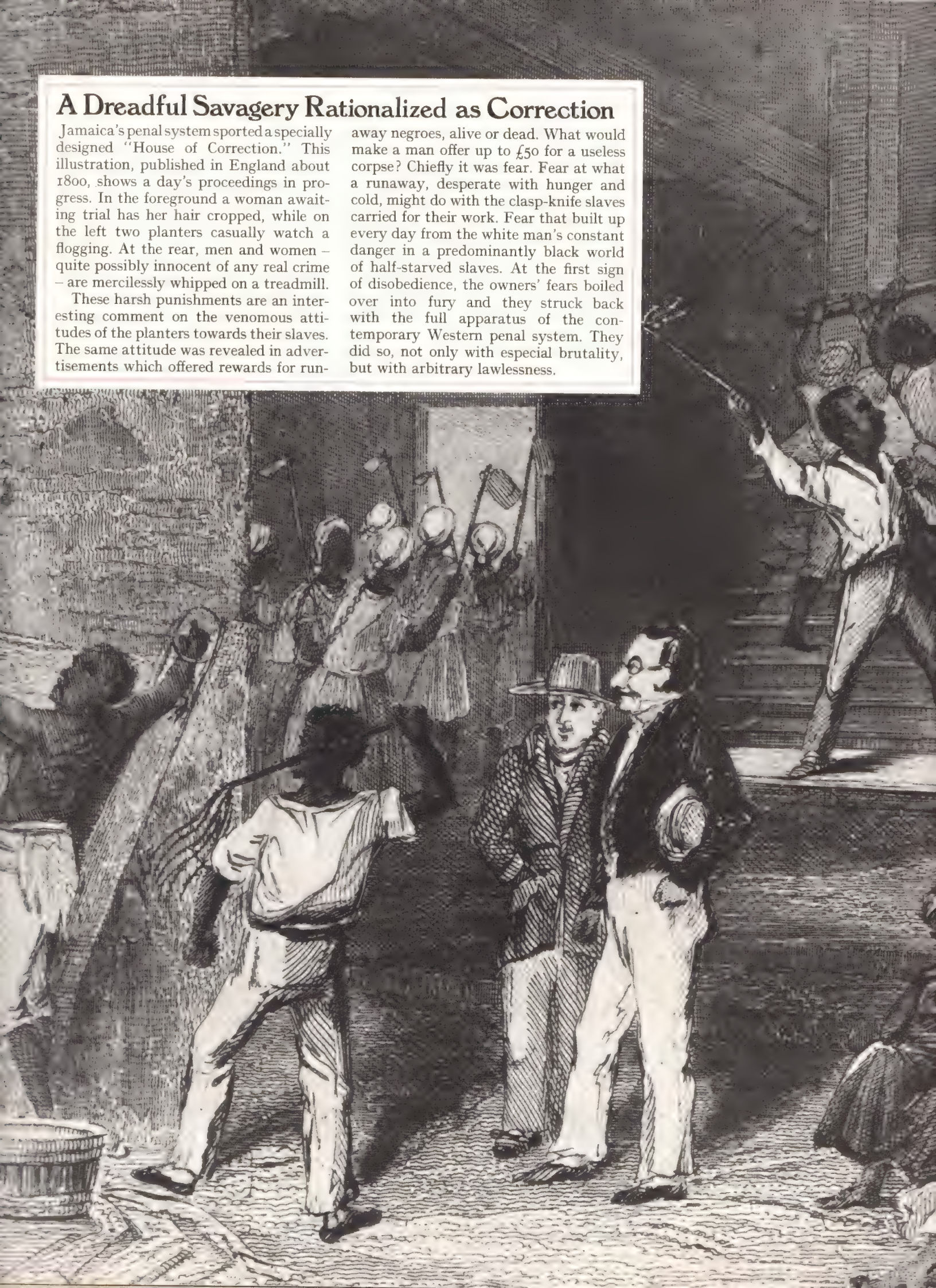
That is one view. Another is that the planters found brutality more profitable than kindness. There was a hot controversy about this in Antigua in the 1750s, from which the advocates of cruelty emerged on top. They were able to demonstrate that it was cheaper to wear slaves out young "before they became useless" and buy fresh stock from the ships when they died, rather than support into old age slaves crippled by incessant labour.

This extraordinary device, originally designed in West Africa to make certain that escapees became inextricably entangled in the jungle, was also used in the Caribbean as a punishment. The prongs often three feet long, prevented the wearer lying down.

A Dreadful Savagery Rationalized as Correction

Jamaica's penal system sported a specially designed "House of Correction." This illustration, published in England about 1800, shows a day's proceedings in progress. In the foreground a woman awaiting trial has her hair cropped, while on the left two planters casually watch a flogging. At the rear, men and women – quite possibly innocent of any real crime – are mercilessly whipped on a treadmill.

These harsh punishments are an interesting comment on the venomous attitudes of the planters towards their slaves. The same attitude was revealed in advertisements which offered rewards for runaway negroes, alive or dead. What would make a man offer up to £50 for a useless corpse? Chiefly it was fear. Fear at what a runaway, desperate with hunger and cold, might do with the clasp-knife slaves carried for their work. Fear that built up every day from the white man's constant danger in a predominantly black world of half-starved slaves. At the first sign of disobedience, the owners' fears boiled over into fury and they struck back with the full apparatus of the contemporary Western penal system. They did so, not only with especial brutality, but with arbitrary lawlessness.



III. The Dividends of Slavery

Tombstones of the 18th Century in a Bristol suburb suggest that slaves were equal in the sight of God, but only after death.

The lack of understanding combined with half-remembered myths about Africa to create justifications for slavery. People believed that all Africans were cannibals, they practised appalling brutalities on each other. Slavery, so ran the popular belief, was a distinct step up from the savagery in which negroes lived.

Most Englishmen, therefore, would have considered it eccentric even to question the rights and wrongs of slavery. Indeed, the Old Testament provided specific precedents and sanctions. In Genesis, Noah curses Canaan, the son of swarthy Ham: "a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren"; and in Leviticus, God instructs Moses: "Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids . . . shall be of the heathen that are round about you."

But some Europeans justified slavery from the opposite side of the religious fence. Starting with the Spaniards, many Catholics and Protestants considered it their duty to baptize the heathen, thus conferring a Christian blessing and rendering enslavement almost holy. Jean Barbot, in an early presentation of the myth of the

An ornately uniformed negro page gave to elegant households of Georgian England an additional touch of fashion and social cachet.

happy slave, wrote: ". . . the fate of such as are bought and transported from the Coast to America . . . is less deplorable than that of those who end their days in their native country . . . not to mention the advantage they may reap of becoming Christians and saving their souls."

James Boswell, after dutifully recording attacks on slavery by his hero Dr. Johnson, recorded his own pro-slavery views: "To abolish a *status* which in all ages GOD has sanctioned . . . would be extreme cruelty to the African savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre, or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces them to a much happier state of life. . . . To abolish the trade would be to '– shut the gates of mercy on mankind.'"

But the pragmatists were more forthright. An 18th-Century economist, Malachy Postlethwayt, put his finger firmly on the underlying financial and political realities: 'The *Negroe-Trade* and the natural Consequences resulting from it, may be justly esteemed an inexhaustible Fund of Wealth and Naval Power to this Nation."

Both government and private enterprise profited handsomely from the start. In the early days of the Royal African Company, its stockholders earned dividends as high as 300 per cent. But the monopoly's overheads were high, too; by the 1680s, the price of slaves delivered had rocketed from £7 to £20 per head. The sugar islanders groaned. And fly-by-night interlopers risked punishment by death to carry West Africans to the Caribbean at cut-rate prices. Under the dual pressure from planters and illegal traders, the government in 1698 was forced to permit any English skipper to carry slaves, so long as he paid one-tenth of his cargo's value to the company. Altogether, company and private skippers delivered some 300,000 slaves to the New World.

Slavery and the sugar islands soon earned more for England than the entire revenue of the East India Company. Part of the slaving profits came from a curious contract, the *Asiento*, which was sold by the Spanish King and licensed the holder to supply Spain's colonies with blacks. At first it went to individual merchants, later to whichever nation held maritime supremacy. England obtained it in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht which ended the War of the Spanish Succession and established her as Europe's leading commercial power with control over the West African coast from the Gambia River to the Congo. The traders of the recently formed South Sea Company contracted to supply Spanish America with 144,000 slaves over 30 years, in return for which they paid King Philip V a flat sum of 200,000 crowns plus 33⅓ crowns for every slave delivered. They also paid one quarter of their profits to the Spanish Treasury, and a second quarter to the English.

For SALE by the CANDLE,
At R. Williamſon's Shop near the Exchange, on Friday the 10th of June next, at one o'Clock at Noon.
The Ship STAINSIKER,
John Ward, late *Maſter*,
Who was Unfortunately killed.
Burthen 250 Tons, about 4 Years old, ſquare Sterned, and Built at Whitby, now lying in the wet Dock.
N. B. She is extreamly well found, a prime Sailor, and in every reſpect well contrived for any Trade.— For farther Particulars apply to Meſſrs Gorrell and Pownall, Merchants.
Inventories will be timely diſperſed, by
[Robert Williamſon, Broker.]
At the ſame Time will be ſold by Auction.
One large Negroe Hearth with 2 Iron Furnaces.
1 Copper Ditto for 450 Slaves.
1 Decoction Copper Kettle.
1 Iron Furnace 245 Gallons, with a Lead Top, ſufficient to boil 10 Barrels of Liquor
1 Ditto Ditto Pan.
A Parcel of Shackles and Handcuffs.
Ditto. Chains, Neck-Collars, and Handcuffs.
N. B. *All the above little, if any, worſe than new.*

The auction notice for this ship, described as "well contrived for any trade," avoids calling it a slaver.

Treaty or no, the venomous relationship between Spain and England persisted. In the 1730s, English skippers began to smuggle cotton goods and slaves into Spanish America. Spain struck back. Her coastguards boarded and searched English vessels. Public opinion at home was inflamed by a certain Captain William Jenkins, who claimed to have had his ear sliced off in a Spanish boarding operation. The ensuing War of Jenkins' Ear from 1739 to 1741 merged into the confused European land war over the Austrian succession. Peace was finally restored in 1748 and two years later Britain sold back the *Asiento* to Spain for the sum of £100,000.

As trade both with Africa and the Americas grew, Bristol, better placed geographically for both runs than London, became the nation's premier slaving-port. In the mid-18th Century, Bristol in its turn gave way to Liverpool. The Royal African Company, ailing ever since it lost its monopoly, collapsed; a consortium of merchants, aided by government subsidies, took over its trading-forts. The newcomers were mostly men of the industrial-minded north, and Liverpool was the natural port for their manufactured goods. By 1764, the Merseysiders had 74 slavers compared with Bristol's 32.

In 1797, one Liverpool ship in four was a slaver; local merchants had captured five-eighths of the English trade and three-sevenths of the trade of all Europe. By 1800, Liverpudlians had made a clean sweep – nine-tenths of the combined trade of England and Europe.

Liverpool and the industrial hinterland which supplied the trade-goods

continued on p. 110

Bristol's bustling activity and its prosperous merchants' houses were built on the slave-trading profits that made this city the leading slaving-port of early 18th-Century Britain.

used the profits of slavery to help finance the Industrial Revolution. Liverpool merchants invested in great docks, canals, foundries, factories; in addition, they underwrote Watt's steam-engine, the construction of the Liverpool–London railway and the expansion of the Welsh slate industry.

The lion's share of slaving profits was in the hands of about ten major companies, but virtually everybody dabbled in the business. A contemporary account in *A General and Descriptive History of Liverpool* notes that "he who cannot send a bale will send a bandbox. . . . Small vessels are fitted out by attornies, drapers, ropers, grocers, tallow-chandlers, barbers, taylors." Small investors would buy an eighth, a sixteenth or even a thirty-secondth of a venture.

Ships' chandlers displayed leg-irons, manacles, thumbscrews and other essentials of the trade. Jewellers offered silver padlocks for "Blacks and Dogs." Liverpool matrons sauntered about attended by small black boys fancifully dressed in silk costumes and shimmering turbans. A well-known actor, George Frederick Cooke, shouted at an obstreperous audience: "I have not come here to be insulted by a set of wretches, every brick in whose infernal town is cemented with an African's blood."

Slavery, it is clear, produced wealth. But it was also vitally connected with naval power. Slaving vessels provided a steady source of trained seamen who, in time of war, could be conscripted by the Royal Navy. So the men responsible for the Navy were vehement defenders of the trade. Moreover, the ports established by this commerce had, in effect, become a string of naval bases throughout the Spanish Main – strategically placed centres from which England could hold at bay, or harass, her perennial maritime enemies, the Dutch, the Spanish and the French.

The Royal Navy continued to look to slavers for crews until 1791, when statistics presented to Parliament showed that 21·5 per cent of English seamen died in the Middle Passage, almost double the percentage of slave mortality. In addition, some 20 per cent were either left permanently crippled, diseased or blinded, or had been abandoned in Guinea and in the New World. The Navy had second thoughts. A man-of-war commander, Sir George Young, declared to Parliament that the Guinea trade was no longer "a nursery but a grave for seamen."

Across the Atlantic, however, slavery had gone from strength to strength, and was becoming a major factor in the increasing enmity between England and the Thirteen Colonies. The Yankees had moved into the trade with rum. This was distilled in New England from the molasses the Americans took home in exchange for the wretched "Jamaica quality" fish they sold as slave-fodder in the sugar islands. In 1723, the Yankees shipped a few experimental hogsheads to the Guinea coast; the New England spirits proved to the black rulers' taste. Thus began the second triangular trade – molasses to rum to slaves.

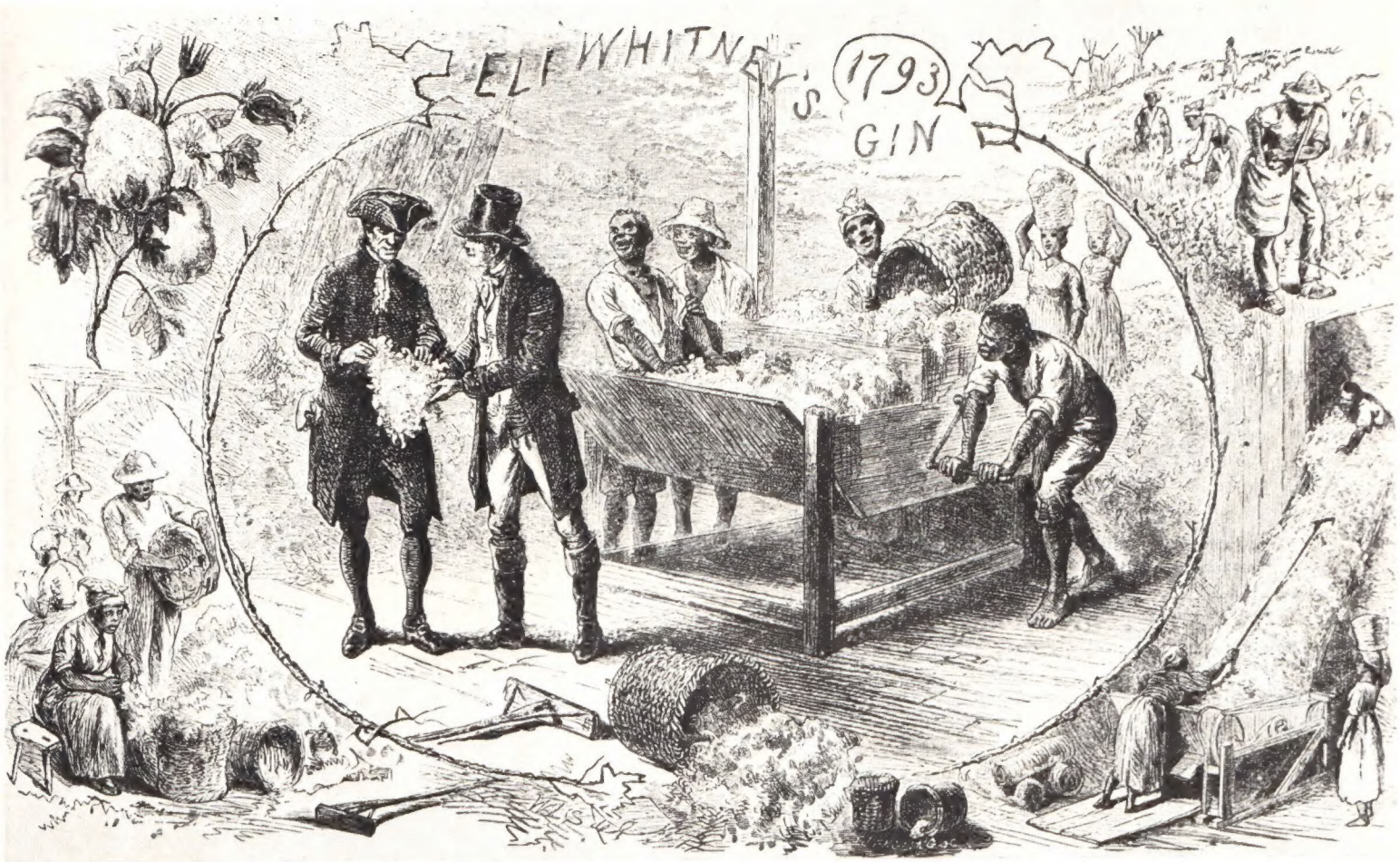
By mid-18th Century, rum was pouring into Africa from more than 100 New England distilleries. But the demand – at roughly 200 gallons per slave – exceeded the ouput. Simeon Potter, a Rhode Islander, directed his skippers: "Worter yr. Rum . . . and sell as much by the short mesur as you can." Boston slavers penetrated the inner reaches of the Gambia to Yamyamacunda, sometimes paying off with pewter dollars polished to gleam like silver.

New Englanders and sugar islanders were mutual sources of profit. But the Yankees wanted more. They began to sell their slaves for cash in the British Caribbean islands, then buy their molasses from the French islands at knock-down rates. Infuriated British planters lobbied Parliament which, in 1733, passed the Molasses Act. This laid a crippling duty on molasses imported by colonists from anywhere other than British-owned islands. The immediate result was spirited smuggling by the Yankees and the French, and a greater financial loss than ever to the British planters.

Meanwhile, the demand for slaves in the North American colonies increased steadily, particularly in the South, where vast rice, tobacco and indigo plantations along the seaboard made their proprietors as labour-hungry as the sugar islanders. Yankee slavers, fighting for their share of this market, as well as that in the Caribbean, regularly flouted the Molasses Act. Consequently, Parliament in 1764, again egged on by the island planters, passed the Stamp Act, which taxed a variety of colonial imports and made non-British sugar, molasses and rum subject to oppressive duties.

In 1766, delegates from nine of the Colonies protested against the tax to King George III and to Parliament – in vain. In 1774, the First Continental

Slave-picked cotton was immensely profitable in America, Planters' demands for more negroes prolonged the illegal slave-trade until the South was defeated in the Civil War in 1865.



The invention of the cotton-gin revitalized America's cotton industry, which was built on a constant supply of slave-labour from West Africa.

Congress decreed an end to all trade with England, slaves included, as of January 1, 1775. The following year the Colonies proclaimed their freedom.

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, recognized, as did many of its other signatories, that it was illogical and hypocritical for whites to fight for their own rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" and yet exclude the blacks from this blessing. Passionately supported by John Adams, he tried to include an anti-slavery clause in the Declaration. Southern delegates blocked the move. After Independence was won in 1783 there were more English sailors supplying American buyers with more negro slaves than ever before.

In 1793, thanks to Eli Whitney, an unemployed young lawyer from Yale University, the Anglo-American trade hit a spectacular new peak. Whitney headed south to try to find a teaching post. En route he stopped at a small plantation near Savannah, Mulberry Grove, owned by Catherine Greene, the gay and elegant widow of a Revolutionary War general. Talk turned, as it was doing on other plantations, to short-staple cotton, a starveling crop. The seemingly insuperable problem was how to separate the seeds from the fibres.

It took a slave an entire unprofitable day to pick the seeds from a single pound, a frustration for planters, with the newly mechanized textile-mills of England ravenous for as much cotton as anyone could grow. Within ten days, Whitney had invented the cotton-gin, a simple arrangement of rollers, spikes and bristles which plucked seed from staple so quickly that a single slave could clean not one but 50 pounds of cotton a day. He made virtually nothing out of his invention which was pirated by cotton-growers everywhere. But he did, in all innocence, revolutionize life in the South.

Cotton plantations spread from the east coast as far west as the Mississippi Valley. There was an unprecedented demand for slaves, who soon began to fetch the dollar equivalent of £100 apiece. Between 1804 and 1807, 39,075 slaves arrived in Charleston alone in 202 vessels, 70 of Liverpool registry, 61 Charleston's own, and 61 out of Rhode Island's chief ports. In 1807, 95 ships disgorged 15,676 Africans on to Charleston's teeming quays.

But for English slavers, the party was over. Abolitionist sentiment had long since begun to outstrip the innate urge to trade. Towards the end of the 18th Century, anti-slavery forces coalesced into a political movement. On January 1, 1808, a Parliamentary act, which had been passed the year before, became effective. The act "utterly abolished,

prohibited and declared to be unlawful . . . all manner of dealing and trading" in slaves. Punishments included fines and the seizure of ships and, later, transportation and even execution for those who continued to trade in slaves.

The last English slaver to sail legally was *Kitty's Amelia*, which left England on July 27, 1807, under the command of Captain Hugh Crow, a rollicking, one-eyed Manxman who had been on the Guinea circuit for 18 years. It was ironic that after so long and dark a history, England's role in the commerce should end on an almost frivolous, musical-comedy note.

Crow was kindly, conscientious and, as he saw himself, even endearing. He was one of the rare captains who issued lime juice to crew and slaves to prevent scurvy. On the various vessels he captained, he survived shipwreck, capture and imprisonment by the French, fires at sea, devastating attacks of dysentery that swept through his entire complement – everything but mutiny by his crews or insurrections by his slaves, routine for other captains.

From his memoirs, it would appear that things were harmonious aboard his ships, even at the worst of times. When skippering the slaver, *Will*, he fought off, in succession, a privateer, three frigates and an 18-gun French cruiser. "Slave women," he recorded, "gathered round me and saluting me in their own rude manner, thanked their gods with tears in their eyes that we had overcome the enemy."

On another vessel, he defeated a French privateer, with slaves serving the guns alongside his sailors. From time to time, the Royal Navy would impress his crew at sea; then he would pick a handful of likely looking slaves and quickly teach them how to sail.

In Africa, he was a close friend of two kings, Pepple and Holiday, who jointly ruled Bonny, in what is now Nigeria. When he told King Holiday that there was to be no more slaving, the shocked monarch, he writes, wailed: "Crow, you and me sabby each other long time, and me know you tell me true mouth. . . . You king and you big man stop we trade, and s'pose dat true, what we do? For you sabby me have . . . too much child. . . . S'pose some of we child go bad and we no can sell em, we father must kill dem own child; and s'pose trade be done we force kill too much child same way. But we tink trade no stop, for all we Ju-Ju man. . . . say you country no can niber pass God Almighty."

At the end of Crow's penultimate voyage, slaves who had fought beside him on earlier passages greeted him on the dock at Kingston, Jamaica, with a calypso:

Cap'n Crow em come again,
But em always fight and lose some mans,
But we glad for see em now and den,
Wid em hearty, joyful, gay. . . .
Wid em hearty, joyful, gay ara.

What was the total human cost to Africa of the trans-Atlantic slave-trade?

Estimates vary widely. The commerce was chaotic: companies and port authorities kept only sporadic records, complete only for a given place over a given period. Earlier in this article, a recent and admittedly conservative estimate of 11,000,000 slaves was quoted. This figure is based on studies taking into account, among other factors, the total shipping tonnage available, but it includes only those slaves believed to have boarded vessels on the African coast. To this must be added a host of unverifiable but substantial imponderables. What statistics could possibly encompass the interlopers who darted along the Guinea coast, picking up one slave here, another there, and selling them off illegally in the creeks and inlets of the Southern colonies?

Who is ever to know how many negroes died in the raids and wars stirred up to provide African potentates with profit-making prisoners? Or how many fell in the coffles, in the baracoons or on the beaches? The numbers lost prior to shipment can never be determined. Nor can anyone possibly guess the number of babies who might have been born in Africa but were never born at all because the "prime" young men and women who would have been their parents were transported across the sea in chains.

Kindly Captain Crow commanded the last slaver to leave a British harbour. He supplied lime juice and clean towels, an ironically humanitarian end to Britain's three brutal centuries of the trade in human beings.

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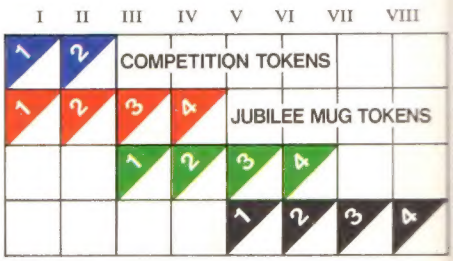
To get this superb mug just send a cheque or postal order for 90p, together with red tokens from this week's and the three previous weeks' issues of *The British Empire*. Orders must be received not later than March 31st. Please allow 28 days for delivery.

How the token scheme works

Each week, there are two tokens on the inside front cover of The British Empire. This week, there's the fourth red Jubilee Mug token and the second green British Empire Coin Collection token. Each week, you should collect these tokens to take advantage of the exciting offers that are on their way. And every week, as you collect towards the current offer, you'll be getting a start towards the next. The chart shows you how it all works.

NOTE: If you miss a token, your newsagent will be able to order the appropriate back number of The British Empire for you.



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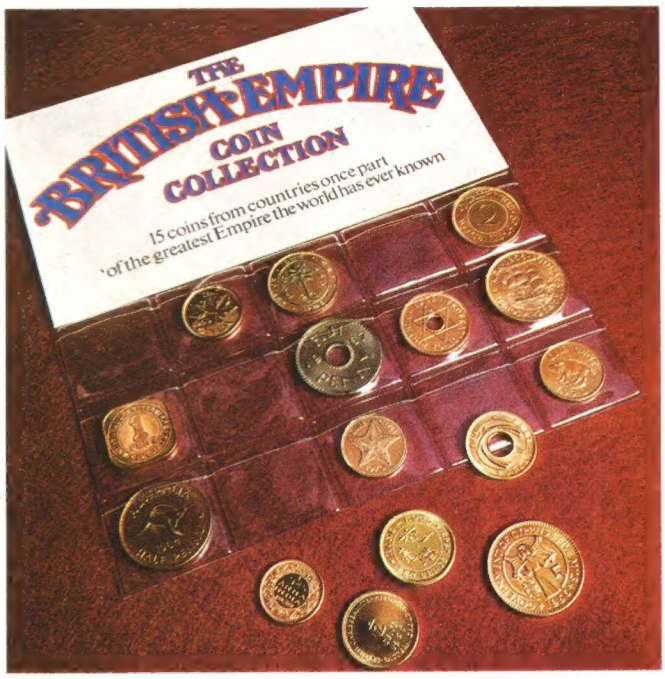

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